

CHARACTERS; WIERD AND WONDERFUL FACES AROUND US.

BY

HANCHEN MEYER.



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INTRODUCTION - EXPLORING THE HORIZONS OF CREATIVE PEOPLE PHOTOGRAPHY.

There are people all around us, but what makes a photograph of a person or people interesting or unusual? Creativity is found in all of us, but it is up to each one to explore, to create, to capture interest and keep it.

Many of the best photographers use their photographic art to interpret and comment on our world. Photography is not simply a tool of documentation. However, when a photograph is understood to be only a documentation of an object or event, the main aim is to provide a representation which is as realistic as possible. On the other hand, when a photograph is seen as an interpretation of and comment on our world, the main aim is to evoke mood and express emotion.

Of course the eventual use of the photograph will influence the amount of artistic freedom one can exercise. Shooting for one's own enjoyment, the sky is the limit. Shooting for a client, there may be restrictions.

The above mentioned distinction between photographs with a dominant referential function (e.g. documentary images) and photographs with a dominant expressive function (e.g. fine art photographs) serve as the point of departure for the discussion of creative people photography in this script.

Discussed will be techniques for creative photography, what makes a picture creative, the lighting of portraits and how to develop an own unique style. Also added are an appendix on the tools used in graphic imaging and a short history on the apple computer since computers also play an important role in modern photography and especially in creative work since almost anything can be achieved. It is, however, up to each one to broaden their horizons.

SECTION ONE - WHAT MAKES A PICTURE CREATIVE?

Originality is the personalized approach that makes a creative picture. The simplest, most straightforward techniques and materials can create highly creative works when the photographer applies his unique way of seeing and puts himself into his pictures without holding back. Going all the way means taking risks - creativity is not risk-free and uncharted territory may have to be entered to make original, creative works - without the potential of failure, there is no originality.

Sometimes creativity is made up as the photographer goes along, talents must be valued and ability trusted.

Creativity is capitalizing on mistakes. A good photographer is someone who can repeat his mistakes.

Mistakes or accidents, can become the basis for exciting and original new techniques. In the pursuit of originality, it's important to be undaunted by "being wrong".

Creativity uses both intuition and intent. Intuition: subconscious insight and understanding, and intent: conscious judgement and technical expertise working together to create successful photographs. Intuition gives pictures impact, while intent gives the means to express intuition.

The photographer can learn many new ideas and techniques to add to his creative repertoire from his peers. But where is the line between inspiration and imitation?

Use the work of other photographers, visual artists and even musicians and writers as inspiration to create original work. Dissect the work, determine what elements make it successful and what elements are incidental to its success.

Then elaborate the spirit of the work, the medium or the technique, but not the work in its entirety, unless it's being used purely as a learning exercise. Never sell a literal re-creation of another's work to a client and never try to pass off another's technique or invention as own work. Always acknowledge the sources of inspiration, and there will be less accusation of imitation.

SECTION TWO - TECHNIQUES FOR CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY.

The framing of the subjects, uses of shadows and blur and even type of film to use is vital to creative photography, but maybe the most important point is the lighting of the subjects.

A good portrait, one that is well composed, includes not just framing but perspective, field and colour, use of shadows and blur and repetition - all of these elements should work together to create movement; a great composition makes the viewer's eye flow across the picture.

Ninety percent of the time when shooting a human subject, the best format will be vertical. This holds true when shooting full-body, mid range or head shots. There are many ways to frame the subject - let go of traditional, boring horizontal or vertical shots, position the camera at different weird angles for more effect and avoid placing the subject right in the middle or try balancing with other elements. For head shots, the eyes or head can be centred - with multiple subjects, one subject or both can be centred.

Some compositions can be made more exiting if the subject is framed off centre which can create drama and tension. If the subject is looking out of the frame, it can be placed off-centre, looking into a spot created for it. If several different shots are arranged together to form a collage, it can also create informal balance - these are just two choices of many - let each subject pose and the setting dictate whether to employ formal or informal balance to the composition.

Fill the picture up with the subject - there is nothing worse than too much wasted space saying nothing - head shots can be very successful with no space above the head or even part of the head chopped off. Full-length shots generally need a little space above and below the subject, but think before shooting - does the whole figure need to be in, or would this be a better

composition if it were shot tighter - one exception to the rule of filling the frame with the subject is if an object in the field compliments or balances the composition - in this case the shot can be framed wider to include the object.

Generally - but not always - it's most desirable for the person viewing the photograph to be first drawn to the face, and especially to the eyes of the subject, because eyes are far and away our most expressive feature. This can be accomplished effectively in simple and complex compositions.

It is important to maintain only one centre of interest even when there is more than one subject - generally, to maintain the flow of the composition the subject should be touching one another or overlapping in some way.

Putting objects in the foreground can frame the shot, add depth and visual interest and leap the viewer's eye to the subject - on location, it's relatively easy to find objects that lend themselves naturally to use in the foreground, but take special care in the studio that anything put in the foreground doesn't look too contrived.

Some people photograph from their own eye level all the time. This is a big mistake, because the perspective chosen can greatly influence the mood, hence the entire message of the picture. The perspective of a photograph sends messages both consciously and subconsciously, and shapes feelings about the subject. Shooting from different perspectives can also help a photographer manipulate his field to the best advantage.

Colour, or in the case of black-and-white photography tonal value - is the final elements of composition that can be used to manipulate the eyes of the viewer - how it is applied it is up to the photographer, using repetition of colour to lead the eye through the picture or to the subject, or by the use of dark, dramatic shadows in black-and-white to create mood.



SECTION THREE - THE LIGHTING OF CREATIVE PORTRAITS.

There are many techniques that can be used for creative photography - all of this now has to be put together in developing an own unique style.

The type of light chosen for a given portrait will greatly depend on the feeling to be evoked.

To use light effectively, learn to really see it. Start paying attention to the way sunlight looks at different times of the day, of the year, reflected on water or through tree branches, from a window facing north compared to a window facing south. Understanding the difference between hard and soft light will help in the planing of portrait lighting, whether shooting outdoors, indoors or in the studio.

Hard light - small, direct light source.

Soft light - large, diffused or indirect light source.

To manipulate natural light.

Use diffusion screens to soften direct sunlight use fill-in flash to soften shadows and brighten up skin tones.

Use over-the-lens diffusers to soften overall contrast and skin texture.

Use reflector cards to bounce light onto the subject, balancing the lighting and softening shadows.

Available light can come from a window, candle, fire....anything. It can be natural sunlight or artificial lamplight.

For best results when using available light:

1. Be aware of the colour balance of common available light sources and use the corrective gels accordingly.
2. When available light is low, use a fast, grainy film such as Kodak 1600 Ektapress film to capture the shot, rather than resorting to direct flash.
3. When available light must be segmented, its important to make the extra light seem natural and logical. The additional light should not overpower the available light, but should be the same or slightly weaker f-stop.

Direct flash can be very hard and unnatural looking, hard shadows, washed-out skin tones destroying detail in areas of highlight and creating red eye (light entering subject's eyes and bouncing back directly at lens).

Unlike natural light where what you see is what you get, its hard to visualize the effect achieved with flash.

If using flash, try bouncing it off a reflector card, the ceiling or even your hand.

Common lighting problems.

Don't over-light the subjects.

Don't use too many light sources.

Use reflectors instead of light to fill in whenever possible.

Don't rely on direct flash for everything.

Setting exposures - there is no one correct exposure at which to shoot a given picture, in fact, by changing exposure an enormous range of moods can be achieved with the very same light.

SECTION FOUR - DEVELOPING AN OWN STYLE.

Be decorative - most direct colour, formal portraits do not stand on their own as decorative objects - in contrast, an art portrait can be displayed any place one would normally hang other 'art' frequently in places of highly visibility; over mantels, in entrances and great rooms.

Show your creative intent - if you make a photograph with the intent to surpass mere documentation and create artwork that expresses your subject's true essence, you will probably succeed.

Incorporate skill and emotion - while a work must be well crafted to succeed, skill alone is not enough to satisfy the definition of art. In addition to being skilfully executed, the work should evoke some emotion in the viewer.

Personalise your photographs - interpret, don't just record your subjects, use blur, shadows, colour, things that make you stand out.

Enjoy the process - we all enjoy having a beautiful picture made, but we should also enjoy the process of making the picture.

Let wrong be right - rather than searching for the "correct" exposure, the "correct" film type or the "correct" lens, you can explore doing things "incorrectly".

Experiment - Give yourself hands-on experience with every possible technique, piece of equipment and material you can find. When you come across a medium that helps you express your vision, refine it, master it, make it your own.

Welcome Failure - you can't be innovative and try new techniques without failing once in a while. It is really true that you learn more from your failures than you do from your successes.

Let your style evolve - while it's important to be aware of what you're trying to say in making your pictures and to realize that your personal style is shaping the outcome of your shooting, it's also important not to over analyze or over control your approach. Indulge your joys and interests, don't allow your style to remain static.

What keeps a picture from being creative?

Novelty in the use of materials, or unusual cropping and style don't make a picture creative and perhaps more important, they don't make a picture good. Photographs that are avant-garde or different for the sake of being different may yield results that are self-conscious, overly precise or just simply weird. Secret formulas for processing, printing and lighting and being the first and only one to use them won't make your work creative.

Perfection doesn't equal originality nor does it guarantee a great photograph. In fact, the perfect photograph does not even exist - the quest for perfection can cause paralysing fear, preventing uncountable originals from being made.

SECTION FIVE - IS IT STILL A PHOTOGRAPH?

What effect will the proliferation of digital imaging have on photography? It's already given us electronic retouching, enlarging, collaging and image storage, and better, more economical systems of electronic image capture aren't far behind. In the long term, nobody knows precisely how photography will be transformed, but it will surely never be the same, indeed, the meaning of the word 'photography' has already changed. A broad modern definition might be: 'a visible image, significant parts of which are generated by light striking a light-sensitive medium, or in which image-forming light is converted into an electronic signal that is stored and subsequently retrievable in visual form.

Where does one draw the line? At what point does an electronically-enhanced image cease being a photograph or vice-versa? For the moment, there is no generally accepted, clearly defined criterion say '50 - percent photographic' that establishes the limits of each category. Any such determination would be arbitrary, and in any case, most people who buy and use images don't really give a hoot how they were made as long as they communicate their messages effectively.

Its easy to see why so many photographers steeped in the traditional art and craft of silver-halide photography find this era of change, uncertain, increasingly electronic imaging unsettling. But there is nothing to be afraid of. Photography has always managed to bridge the gap between the world of realism and the world of imagination, and to express the meaning and beauty in both.

Tools may change, styles may change, and technology may advance to levels beyond our imagination, but photography, the principle visual art form and communications medium of our age, will endure undiminished.

Reference to appendix.

SECTION SIX - DISCUSSION OF AUTHOR'S OWN WORK.

Plate one - 'Goat's Head Soup'

This photograph was inspired by Indian legends, the way the Indians psyched themselves up before the hunt, the glory of the hunt and finally, the Indian and animal becoming one. The author used the white sheet to show the purity of the earth and good things coming from it and Indians taking only what they need and returning everything back to the earth through dance and meditation. The strong lines of the washing line shows destruction and human trapping freedom as the lines are bars of a cage and the angle the author chose is actually the viewer involved, looking like the poor, helpless creature trapped, through the bars at the sky towards freedom.....

The black-and-white film the author used is to show their sorrow and longing and the hand-tinted blue sky is untouchable, its out of their reach, they are merely onlookers, as the viewer himself.

Plate two - 'Dracula's Palace'

This was done on the computer. The photograph was taken on an overcast day and the sky behind the church was very dull, so the author decided to put in clouds for more mood. Anything can be done on the computer, new technology is amazing and there are various techniques that are easy to use on the computer, such as solarization, changing of colours, overlapping of photo's, changing the sky, the foreground, even the colour of the subjects hair or eyes can be changed - the sky is the limit.

Plate three - 'MudHoney'

Nothing should be overlooked as being creative, not even a facial mask. The idea for a photo came as the mask started to harden and crack, almost like a beast descending from the bellows of earth, or should we say a queen descending to rule over the nothingness that would be left after mankind had vanished? - reversal process was used for this photo.

Plate four - 'The Captive'

Another collage done by the author. How many people are prisoners of their own homes? Maybe because of nothing else to do, waiting for the telephone to ring maybe, only having the television set as an only friend - or is it crime preventing them to leave the house? The magnifying glass the author used is to show, not only everyday paranoia, but also the ever watchful eye scanning for hope.

A collage must be done very neatly to succeed, cutting out especially and then everything must be re-photographed again - the computer can also be used here, to soften hard cut-out lines.

Plate five - 'T-Time'

How many of us don't know the delightful story of *Alice in Wonderland*? The next picture was inspired by exactly that story. Creative photo's are all about telling a story. They must not simply be interesting to look at, but also give a glimpse of what inspired the author to take them. Is the author maybe really struck by insanity and why is "Alice" as white as a sheet with that bewildered look in her eye? - The only way to find out is to join the 'T-party'! Slide film printed as reversal was used here and the intense green background was done by hand-tinting.

Plate six - ' This is your Gateway'

What is seen after death? By whom will the lid of the coffin be opened, who will save the victim out of the dark, cold grave? Will the eyes of the soldier looked into briefly before the shot was fired, haunt this poor victim forever? This photo was inspired by Pink Flood's film 'The Wall' . Again, the reversal colours are used slightly overprinted to give the effect of the grave.

Plate seven - ' People of the Pool (1)'

Sometimes the perfect setting for a photo is just around the corner. The swimming pool in which the next series of photos was taken is located in the author's back yard, it fell in after a rainstorm and became the perfect 'studio'. The idea for this 'fashion shoot gone wrong' just came as the author went along- the cat was luck, she jumped in at precisely the right moment. The cat dress and the girl's hair was done by hand-tinting and koki pen.

Plate eight - 'People of the Pool (2)'

'The aliens have landed!' - ordinary black and white film was used and brightened up by hand tinting.

Plate nine - 'Mime Time'

A fish-eye lens is not always necessary for distortion and special effects - a hubcap of a Volkswagen proved just as effective, all that the model had to do was to pull his face to become a chicken.

Plates ten and eleven - 'A Perfect World'.

Again the hubcap is used to obtain distortion - the world seemed perfect a few centuries back, there was no such thing as pollution and the extinction of species. This lonely girl from that peaceful age, found herself stranded on these lonely planes after finding a gateway to a parallel world where everything is wiped out but a single man made structure - a windmill.....

Plate twelve - 'Good Clean Fun - the Trip'

The most creative photo's can come from mistakes. This picture was not planned, it was supposed to be a long exposure of a guy rolling a joint. The author unknowingly used an exposed film for this purpose, it worked quite well with the idea and now shows the trip the guy is on as well - without this double-exposure, the photo would have been quiet boring.

Plate thirteen - 'Fogged'

This very creative photo was a big 'mistake'. It is a normal figure-study, black and white, printed colour and developed likewise. The creative effect came on when the author was about to put it into the machine, the lights mysteriously came on. The author protectively pressed the print against herself, knowing that the print was fogged, but developed it nevertheless - the outcome was amazing because the author's hands was exactly on the subjects hands and even the MTN. badge on her T-shirt was pressed onto the print. This print 'fogged' well.

CONCLUSION.

Various techniques for creative photography were discussed in this script, the lighting of portraits and the development of an own style. This is only a small chapter in a very thick book, it is up to everyone to explore the various opportunities for creative photography. The human race is all around us, so many different faces, no-one the same, waiting to be captured on film.

Studio photography is not discussed in this script because the author chose to shoot on location - it is, after all where things happen. Studio work can become boring, but it is a matter of choice where and how one chooses to shoot, as long as the creative mind is opened.

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APPENDIX A - A SHORT HISTORY OF THE APPLE COMPUTER.

Computers will be an important part of the future: whether in one's personal life or at the workplace. Some experts think that if one does not know how to use a computer, one eventually will be just as handicapped in performing one's job as the person today who cannot read.

To be computer literate, one must know not only who uses computers, but also how and where they can be used, the tasks they perform, how they affect our society and economy, and how to use them to benefit one's own life and career.

Many microcomputer companies have come and gone, but one of the great rags-to-riches stories is Apple computer, inc. It was founded by Steven Jobs and Stephen Wozniak. This partner's first headquarters was located in Jobs's garage. Wozniak, the technical expert, made a microcomputer affordable for both the individual and the small business person.

Because Jobs knew very little about circuitry or coding, he provided the marketing impetus for the small company. The first Apple computers came on the market in 1977.

Another benchmark in the microcomputer revolution was the introduction of the Apple Macintosh in the early 1980's. The Macintosh was visually oriented, and its mouse made it remarkably easy to use. It was praised for its ability to produce graphics and to print text of near-typeset quality using Apple's laserwriter.

Magnetic discs became the primary means of internal storage. The proliferation of application programs for microcomputers allowed home and business users to adapt their computers for word processing, spreadsheet manipulating, file handling, graphics, and much more.

APPENDIX B - TOOLS USED IN GRAPHIC IMAGES.

Mouse Control.

In a graphics-oriented interface, the mouse is often used to control a program. The mouse is used to position the cursor on the screen and for point - and - click operation such as selecting menu options or selecting icons.

Interface Features.

The user interface is the portion of the program that the user interacts with - entering commands to direct the application software and viewing the results of those commands.

Menus.

Many application programs, also allows commands to be selected from a menu, which is a list of actions or options from which one can choose. Sub menus often are listed under main menus because some applications have as many as several hundred or more commands from which to choose.

Keyboard Control.

Most user interfaces, allow control of the program by making entries on a keyboard. This may involve typing commands or using various keys or key combinations to control the cursor or achieve a desired action. Graphics-based applications use the scroll-bar approach, but usually can use the keyboard as well.

Status Lines.

The status line at the top or bottom of a display screen provides information about the current document or file and the system.

Buttons.

Some graphics-based interfaces present choices that appear as 'buttons' to be 'pushed' on the screen. These buttons can be selected by using a mouse.

Dialog Boxes.

Usually appears in a window on the screen; it may contain a question or prompt in text form that requires a response from the user.

WYSIWYG.

This is the acronym for 'what you see is what you get.' Whatever one sees on the display screen is exactly the way the output will look when it is printed. This feature is often found on a graphics-based interface. However, a graphics-based interface does not necessarily mean a WYSIWYG interface.

Windows.

Windows can be used to split the screen in two or more separate areas so that different parts of the same file, or several different files in an application, can be displayed at the same time. Each window typically has an identification name or number found in its status line so that one can tell which file is being viewed.

Copy.

The copy feature duplicates an entire file.

Rename.

This feature comes in handy if a more descriptive name becomes obvious as the file or document is refined.

Delete.

Allows existing files to be removed or deleted from storage to open up disk space for new material.

How graphics software works.

Some graphic software requires a co-processor, a separate processor chip inside the computer. In many cases, one must buy this chip separately to insert in the computer. Some have a co-processor built in. The purpose of a compressor is to take some of the heavy burden from the main processor. A math compressor handles any math functions associated with creating the graphics, and a graphics compressor handles screen activities. Without a graphic compressor, one often would wait a long time for the screen to refresh itself (redraw) when changes are made to the image.

Types of graphic images.

Bitmapped graphics - lets one create an image much the same way as one would using traditional painting tools. The individual picture element dots, called pixels made up a display screen and are turned on and off to form various shapes. The more pixels a display has, the more detail one will see in the image (resolution).

The image one creates is composed of a matrix of pixels, called a bitmap. in which each pixel is assigned an intensity or colour value. The image is formed when the electron beam sweeps at lightning speed in thin parallel lines across the screen, making the phosphor coating in each pixel glow to a particular intensity.

Vector graphics - mathematically defined images. The images are stored as geometric descriptions. The image resolution is not dependent on the amount of pixels per inch. Drawings and illustrations created with vector graphics are very crisp.

APPENDIX C - AUTHOR'S OWN WORK.



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TECHNIKON
VRYSTAAT/FREE STATE

Plate one: "Goat's Head Soup"

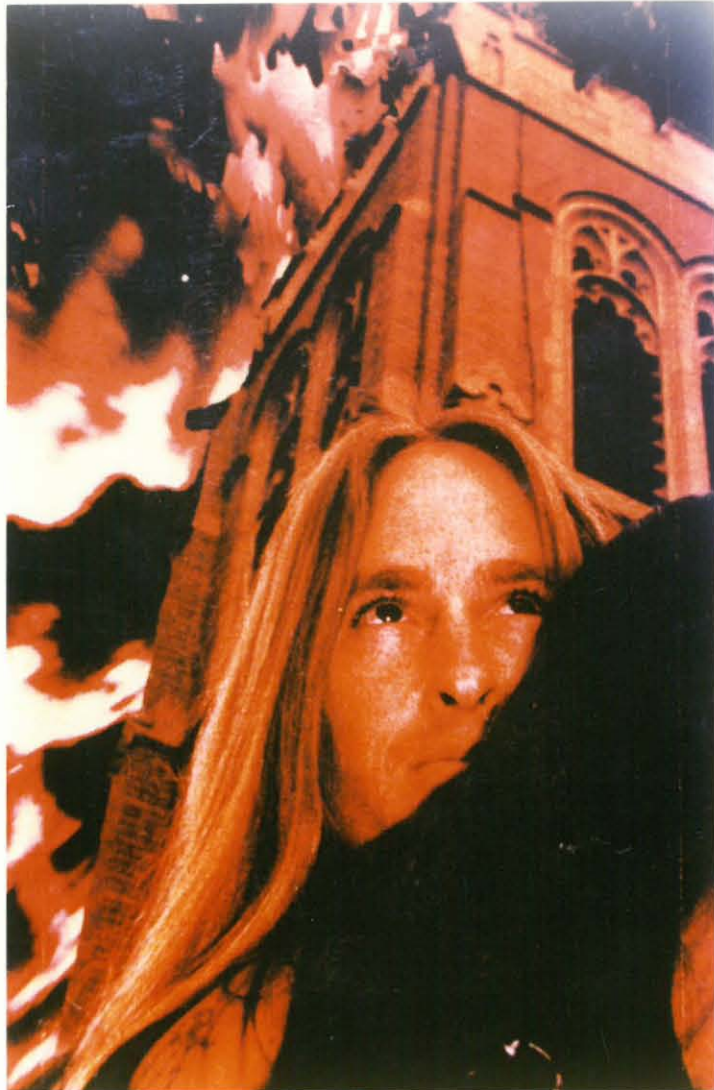


Plate two: "Dracula's Palace"



Plate three: "MudHoney"

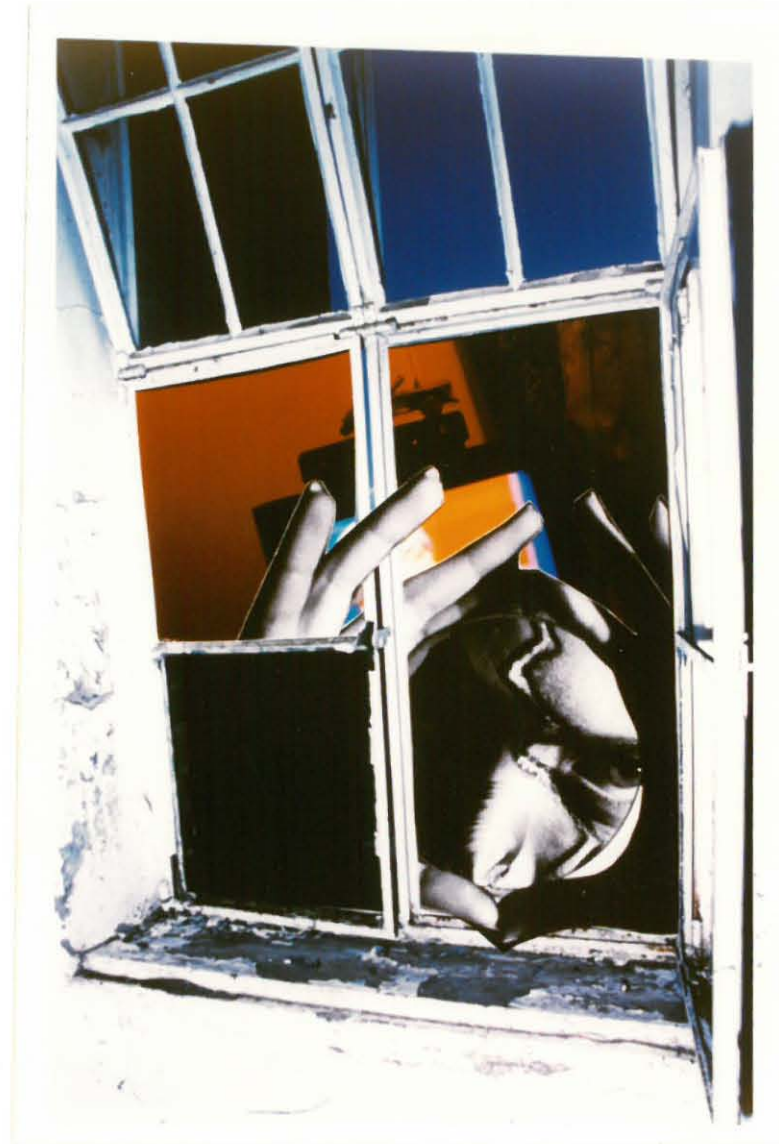


Plate four: "The Captive"





Plate five: "T-Time"



Plate six: "This is your Gateway"



Plate seven: "People of the Pool (1)"





Plate eight: "People of the Pool (2)"



Plate nine: "Mime Time"



Plate 10: "A Perfect World"





Plate eleven: "A Perfect World"



Plate twelve: "Good Clean Fun - the Trip"



Plate thirteen: "Fogged"

